

# Delaware unveils final bee protection plan

DOVER – Delaware's new pollinator protection plan outlines strategies, best practices, techniques and resources that beekeepers, farmers, landowners and pesticide applicators can use to help protect and enhance bees and other pollinators, the Delaware Department of Agriculture announced today.

The plan does not contain new rules or regulations, but includes voluntary approaches that can be used by many people to help support pollinators, said Faith Kuehn, plant industries administrator for the Delaware Department of Agriculture.

"Helping our pollinators thrive is everyone's job, and this plan outlines ways that we can all help," said Kuehn. "Pollination is especially critical to our fruit and vegetable growers, and thus has an impact on our economy."

Pollinated crops in Delaware include watermelon, cucumbers, strawberries, cantaloupes, apples, blueberries, cranberries, squash and pumpkins. Delaware farmers bring in about 3,000 bee colonies each year to maximize crop pollination, adding to the work of the state's more than 180 registered beekeepers who have about 1,500 hives.

A draft Managed Pollinator Protection Plan was released for comments in January at Delaware Ag Week. State officials received eight comments and incorporated them into the final version, primarily emphasizing that the strategies were recommended practices and not requirements or regulations.

The plan also includes strategies to increase the quantity and quality of pollinator forage on private and public lands. A copy of the plan is available online at [de.gov/pollinatorplan](https://de.gov/pollinatorplan).

State officials also recommend use of the DriftWatch and BeeWatch programs for beekeepers and farmers, which can open up lines of communication and alert pesticide applicators about special areas before they spray, said Chris Wade, DDA's pesticide compliance administrator.

"We are working to put tools into the hands of those who have a direct impact on pollinator health," Wade said. "A large part of this plan is about encouraging a dialogue between different groups." More information is available at <http://dda.delaware.gov/pesticides/Driftwatch.shtml>.

Delaware is also involved in a three-year project to create demonstration and education sites showcasing forage and land management practices supporting bees and promote honey production and develop best management practices for improving bee forage availability and quantity.

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